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SUBJECT: SUPPORT FOR IRAQI RESISTANCE; PRAISE FOR IRANIAN ELECTIONS; UNUSUAL SELF-CRITICISM: EGYPTIAN MEDIA THEMES, JUNE 27 TO JULY 3

¶11. Summary: Reacting to the President's speech at Fort Bragg, Egyptian newspapers criticized U.S. policy in Iraq and accused the U.S. of falsely portraying the situation there. One editorial said resistance was the only reaction to the U.S. imperialist march. The Iranian elections provided much fodder for analysis and comparison. Most columnists agreed that Ahmadinejad's win in Iran was a result of his popular appeal among the poor of Iran, while others compared Iranian elections to the upcoming Egyptian elections. Coverage of domestic demonstrations increased over the week, including almost daily announcements of dates, times, and locations of upcoming demonstrations. Coverage of the Ayman Nour trial was moderate. And in an unusual occurrence, a columnist in the pro-government Al Ahram criticized illegal imprisonment and torture in Egypt. End summary.

¶12. Resistance to the U.S. in Iraq a must?: On the popular Channel 2 program (06/29), Al Beit Beitik, Independent media mogul Emad Adeeb described the U.S. policy of encouraging democratic reform in the Middle East as "constructive chaos." A June 27 editorial in opposition Al Wafd (circulation: 90,000) by Bahaa El Dine Abu Shouka accused the U.S. of selling an illusion of democracy in Iraq, but that the reality was far more volatile. In the same issue, Hamdi El Shamy, called the U.S. strategy in Iraq "brutal" and said resistance is the only means to stop this "imperialist" march.

¶13. Praise for Iranian elections: The Iranian elections provided much fodder for analysis and comparison. Most columnists agreed that Ahmadinejad's win in Iran was a result of his popular appeal among the poor of Iran. Al Ahram Board Chairman Ibrahim Nafei (June 27) and Islamist Fahmy Howeidy (June 30) both wrote in Al Ahram that the U.S. attitude toward Iran and "aggressive" U.S. attempts to plant democratic regimes in the region influenced the voting of Iranians. Several papers also criticized U.S. statements that the Iran elections were not democratic.

¶14. On July 1, Mohamed Mohammadein wrote in Al Akhbar that the U.S. claims that the Iranian elections were undemocratic was unfair and argued that the U.S. concept of democracy and freedom is limited to what the U.S. deems appropriate for its interests, including electing pro-American leaders in Iraq and Afghanistan. The June 30 edition of Al Wafd carried a cartoon portraying Uncle Sam commenting on the Iranian election: "This is a dictatorship. We're supposed to be the ones who do the selecting!"

¶15. Several commentators compared the Iranian elections to the upcoming Egyptian elections. In the June 30 edition of Al Ahram, Independent Salama Ahmad Salama criticized the new Egyptian political rights laws, comparing the participation and freedom in Lebanese and Iranian elections to Egypt, hoping that the latter could experience the same openness. In independent Al Masry Al Youm (circulation: 20,000) on June 27, columnist Magdy Mehanna wrote that the victory of Ahmadinejad is a "political tsunami," and asked if a similar tsunami could happen in Egypt. He concluded this was probably not possible, particularly since NDP was taking steps to prevent it, such as influencing words of clerics. Several unsigned editorials believed the regime change in Iran would favorably affect that country's relations with the Arab world. However, on July 2, the Channel One television program "Wara El Ahdath" suggested Iranian reformers consider the election results a "disaster."

¶16. Demonstration alerts and increased coverage: Almost every day throughout the week, Egyptian dailies and pan-Arab papers reported on the dates, times, and locations of upcoming political demonstrations, of which there were more than half a dozen. Coverage of these demonstrations was prominent in many Egyptian dailies, including an unprecedented Egyptian TV piece on a peaceful demonstration on June 26 in front of the State Security building that called for an end to torture of political prisoners and the release of Muslim Brotherhood detainees, as well as the resignation of the Interior Minister. The lack of police presence during an earlier Kefaya demonstration in the Shubra neighborhood of Cairo was noted in several

newspapers, including the pan-Arab Al Sharq Al Awsat. However, Farida Al Naqqash noted in the June 29 opposition Al Ahaly that while the Shubra demonstration went unharrassed, a second demonstration in the Lazoughly neighborhood on the same day faced a heavy police cordon.

17. Ayman Nour trial: All Egyptian dailies reported on the June 28 and June 30 court appearances of Al Ghad party chairman Ayman Nour and his co-defendants, though the amount of coverage varied depending on the paper's political affiliation. On June 29, independent Ahmed Ragad wrote in pro-government Al Akhbar that he believes the Egyptian government has made a hero of Ayman Nour by putting him on trial. He recommended that the government drop the charges and cut Nour back down to size.

18. Criticism of Torture: In an unusual bit of criticism in a pro-government newspaper, liberal columnist Salama Ahmed Salama wrote in Al Ahram on July 3 that Egypt should have "an honest and frank discussion of the issue of detention and torture" of Egyptians imprisoned without a trial. He admitted that he felt hypocritical criticizing abuses at Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo, but remaining silent on the circumstances in Egyptian prisons. Salama noted that in the U.S. suspects are arrested and held for questioning, but are released if no charges are filed. This is not the case in Egypt, he said. He also noted that many Americans have called for closing Guantanamo as it has blemished the American image abroad, but that there are no such calls from Egyptians to close detention centers in Egypt where thousands are held without court hearings.

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